THE ORTHODOX WORD

No. 78

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LETTERS

In this part of *The Orthodox Word* we share with our readers a few of the letters we receive, revealing — if only to a small degree — some of the Christian concerns and experiences of the "little flock" which tries to be faithful to Christ in these latter times. To facilitate a free expression of views, most of the letters are published without full signatures, but the names of all writers are known to the editors. All comments of the editors are in italics.

THE ORTHODOX WORD IN HOSPITALS

Both my wife and I find "The Orthodox Word" informative, educational, and inspirational . . . If you have any old issues, I would appreciate it if you could send them to me — I like to leave copies with the sick who truly appreciate this type of reading material.

Rev. S., New York

Ed. comment: Our readers are invited to help us place The Orthodox Word *in hospitals and with the sick. Please send us the names of hospitals known to you which would accept a gift subscription, or the names of priests or laymen who visit hospitals and the sick and would wish to distribute* The Orthodox Word *to them. These subscriptions will be provided from our missionary fund, to which contributions are invited.*

THE OPTINA PRAYER

There is a woman dying in the hospital in a coma — she has a special nurse. This last Monday night I visited the floor she was on to visit some of the nurses there. I happened to go by her room and stop. "How is she doing?" I asked her nurse. "Not too good," she said. Then I noticed that under her right hand was the Holy Bible. "The family asked me to keep it under her hand 'til she died," she said. "How lovely," I replied. "What religion is she?" "Protestant." "Do you mind if I look at her Bible a minute?" "No, go ahead."

It was a well-used, worn-out 1928 King James version of the Bible, with nothing special about it. Several passages were underlined with felt pen. I looked through the pages to see if there were any pictures — there were none. Then, as I was going through the Psalms I saw, stuck between the pages where Psalms 39 and 40 were, a piece of paper with a prayer on it. To my great astonishment it was a prayer of St. John of Kronstadt!

Maybe long ago a friend gave it to her, who knows? At any rate I started copying it on a piece of paper, but the nurse said, 'Why not go downstairs and run off a few copies?" I ran downstairs, ran off a few copies and stuck the original back in the Bible and placed the dying woman's hand back on top. I thought you would like a copy of the prayer, although you probably have it — but to me this copy is special.

Orthodoxy is often where one least expects it. Often we tend to think the

(Continued on inside back cover.)

THE ORTHODOX WORD

For the Mission of True Orthodox Christianity

Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John* (*Maximovitch*), Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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Свят. Праведен Иннокентий, Митрополит Московский и Коломенский. Чудотворец

SAINT INNOCENT OF ALASKA

March 31, 1879

A true apostolic hero, he used his enormous and varied talents in the cause of enlightening human souls with the light of Christ; from a simple married seminarian in the backwaters of Siberia, God raised him up to be a leading hierarch and an inspiration for our day.

Elder Macarius of Pesnosha

Our Spiritual Heroes

IN OUR AGE of moral and spiritual decline, only the heroic example of righteous men and women is able to ignite a zeal for godly living in accordance with the Divine commandments. It is essential, therefore, to preserve the pure image of their God-pleasing lives and to propagate their message, which shines with the simplicity of Christ, coming down from the Apostles and their successors right to our own days, as preserved in the Orthodox Church consciousness. Having pleased God, they reflect His sanctity, according to His command: *Be ye holy, for I am holy* (Lev. 11:44). He made them His friends and endowed them with a power that does not disappear with their earthly death. The saints of God, canonized and uncanonized, are alive in Him and take part in the lives of those who are still on earth, when they are remembered and invoked.

Let us therefore hasten to the holy ones of God, becoming their friends and finding a living contact with them, especially by praying for them and entreating their prayers, so that they, seeing our ardent entreaty, will enlighten us and direct our lives away from this world that lies in evil.

Let the world have its own blind heroes, whose glory fades and can give nothing lasting to humanity — we have our own, even in these latter times, who shine with an immortal glory and lead our souls to heaven. . .

METROPOLITAN GABRIEL OF PETERSBURG
Jan. 26, 1801

A spiritually enlightened church hierarch, Metropolitan Gabriel was in the full Paisian tradition. Under his direction Blessed Paisius' Philokalia was published, the first Orthodox mission was sent to Alaska, and many monasteries were re-established. His great contribution: being in close spiritual contact with the great God-bearing Fathers of his day, he managed not only to earn good repute and exert influence upon the era of Catherine II, but also to give a patristic stimulus to academic theology.

METROPOLITAN PHILOTHEUS OF TOBOLSK
May 31, 1727

This holy and zealous hierarch was a leading missionary in Siberia, where he founded many parishes and monasteries. Miracles have continued to flow from his incorrupt relics even in Soviet times.

BLESSED PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY
Dec. 21 and Nov. 15, 1794

The importance of Blessed Paisius is more acute today than ever before. It is obvious that Orthodox Christians today, disregarding his message, are rapidly losing the "life-line" which links us to genuine living Christianity. Paisius saw this in his day and made a counter-attack — by presenting and assimilating the genuine patristic sources of Christ's other-worldliness and shaping personal and social life in accordance with it.

BLESSED ABBOT NAZARIUS OF VALAAM
Feb. 23, 1809

A severe Sarov ascetic and a counselor during the publication of the first Philokalia in Russia, he revived the ancient Valaam by following the Sarov Rule and living such a refined spiritual life that it evoked a whole army of holy monks for a century, numbering such saint-disciples as Herman of Alaska and Seraphim of Sarov.

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE KONISSKY OF BELO-RUSSIA

Feb. 13, 1795

During the severe Roman Catholic persecution on the Western border of Holy Russia, God raised a zealous defender of Orthodoxy, Archpastor George, whose personal righteousness and loving compassion for his flock found incredible ways to preach, establish brotherhoods, schools, monasteries, and even to print Orthodox texts, culminating in his classic manual of pastoral theology, "The Duties of a Parish Priest."

BISHOP INNOCENT OF PENZA

Oct. 10, 1819

A young idealist of pure Orthodoxy, an ascetic, scholar, and eloquent orator who could not stop his sweetly-flowing teaching, he found himself at odds with the spirit of the times: the unorthodox, unhealthy Western "mysticism." This conflict caused his early and righteous death.

ABBOT PAUL OF MT. ATHOS
Aug. 2, 1840

Having abandoned his wife and children for the monastic struggle on Mt. Athos, Paul spent 38 years in St. Elias' Skete, cultivating the Paisian spiritual inheritance; seven years he spent in Moldavia. His meekness and wisdom of humility made him a key figure among Russians, Greeks, and Moldavians in the growth of Orthodox monasticism on Mt. Athos.

SCHEMA-MONK JOHN THE FINGERLESS
Nov. 16, 1843

A disciple of Paisius Velichkovsky in Moldavia, this ascetic desert-dweller attained spiritual heights by his great humility and was granted visions of divine light. He was so engrossed in the contemplative life that when he was threatened with ordination, out of love for the desert he cut off a finger, and thus was left alone.

METROPOLITAN PHILARET OF MOSCOW
Nov. 19, 1867

A great Holy Father in the patristic tradition for modern times and an eloquent theologian with refined precision, the fragile Metropolitan was also a holy man of prayer, standing for half a century at the helm of the Russian Church and preventing the deluge of non-Christian Westernism from completely undermining Russia.

SCHEMA-MONK IGNATIUS OF OLONETS
April 20, 1852

A true son of Holy Russia who sought the patristic wisdom from his youth on. After pilgrimaging to Solovki, Konevits and Mt. Athos, he settled in the woods of the Northern Thebaid, becoming a true hesychast and mystic at whom Bp. Ignati Brianchaninov marvelled.

ABBOT ANTHONY OF OPTINA
Aug. 7, 1865

A desert-dweller from his youth, with his brother Moses he founded the Optina skete. A beholder of uncreated light, he was a miracle-worker possessing great humility of wisdom.

ELDER LEONID (LEV) OF OPTINA
Oct. 11, 1841

A disciple of one of the great disseminators of Paisius' ideal, Elder Leo combined a natural gift of compassion for suffering people with a touch of foolishness for Christ and became the first great Elder of Optina Monastery, leaving a succession of clairvoyant elders up to this century.

BLESSED PRIEST PETER OF UGLICH

Sept. 3, 1866

Seeing in his contemporaries that even churchliness and piety can be in captivity to the spirit of self-satisfaction, comfort, and worldliness, he rebelled against the prince of this world by taking up a fierce form of self-denial and foolishness for Christ's sake, thereby giving a moving example of Christ's other-worldly wisdom and power in action.

ARCHIMANDRITE PAISIUS THE NEW OF MT. ATHOS

Sept. 6, 1871

Inspired by Paisius Velichkovsky and his revival of the patristic teachings, this archimandrite adhered so closely to his example, reinstituting the Paisian tradition in the Athonite skete of St. Elias, that he was called Paisius the New.

BLESSED ABBOT NILUS OF SORA
July 19, 1870

Having received the Paisian tradition from childhood, this severe ascetic followed in the footsteps of his patron saint in monasticism, St. Nilus of Sora, restored his skete tradition and rebuilt his monastery. He was an iconographer, kept all-night Athonite vigils, and died on the day of his beloved St. Seraphim, to whom he wrote a service.

BLESSED MONK JOHN OF SORA
May 13, 1863

A lame and simple laborer in the monastery of Sora, his humble life was so pleasing to God that he was granted to walk on water and to converse with the Most Holy Mother of God.

Metropolitan Anthony

Remember Your Instructors

Remember your instructors, who have spoken unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7)

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, Holy Orthodoxy, is handed down from generation to generation, from instructor to disciple, from the Holy Apostles to our own day. In our century we are experiencing a crisis of this unbroken Orthodox tradition: outwardly the Orthodox Church has been subjected to fierce persecutions with the open intent of liquidating her entirely; inwardly, Orthodox Christians have been losing the savor of Orthdoxy and finding "wisdom" from sources outside the Church's tradition. Many are discovering—or rediscovering—Holy Orthodoxy today, but all too often this is chiefly an outward conversion that ends in an adaptation of Orthodoxy to the wisdom of this age, for want of real contact with its living tradition.

Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word or by epistle of ours (II Thes. 2:15). The following names are a list of some of the instructors who have handed down the Orthodox Faith and tradition to us in the Russian Church Outside of Russia in the 20th century, and particularly in the difficult years of the Diaspora. While these fathers are of particular significance to our St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, they have been Orthodox instructors also, by their lives or writings or personal examples, to many others in the Church as well; and some of them are of universal Orthodox significance for our times.

Archbishop John Maximovitch

There is a taint of abstract, self-assured "knowledge" in so much of today's "Christianity." But we Orthodox Christians, who are not our own authority but have humbly received our Christianity from our fathers, should be foreigners to all intellectual "re-interpretations" of our Faith. Critics point to the different kinds of Orthodoxy today — ecumenist, renovationist, charismatic, legalistic-canonical, and the rest — and ask us: And how do *you* believe? To this question our first answer is: "We believe as our fathers believed and taught us, and through them we receive the teaching of the Apostles and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself." All men being fallible, these fathers sometimes erred, and sometimes may even have disagreed among themselves; but the whole witness of them together cannot be mistaken. What one is lacking, the others make up.

And so, *seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,* even in our most evil days, *let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our Faith* (Heb. 12:1-2), knowing that these fathers who have begotten us spiritually through the Gospel (I Cor. 4:15) will not fail us in our hour of trial, and that the unbroken link which we have through them to Jesus Christ and His authentic teaching will not be broken to the end of the age.

(Continued on p. 48.)

VITA PATRUM

Chapter One

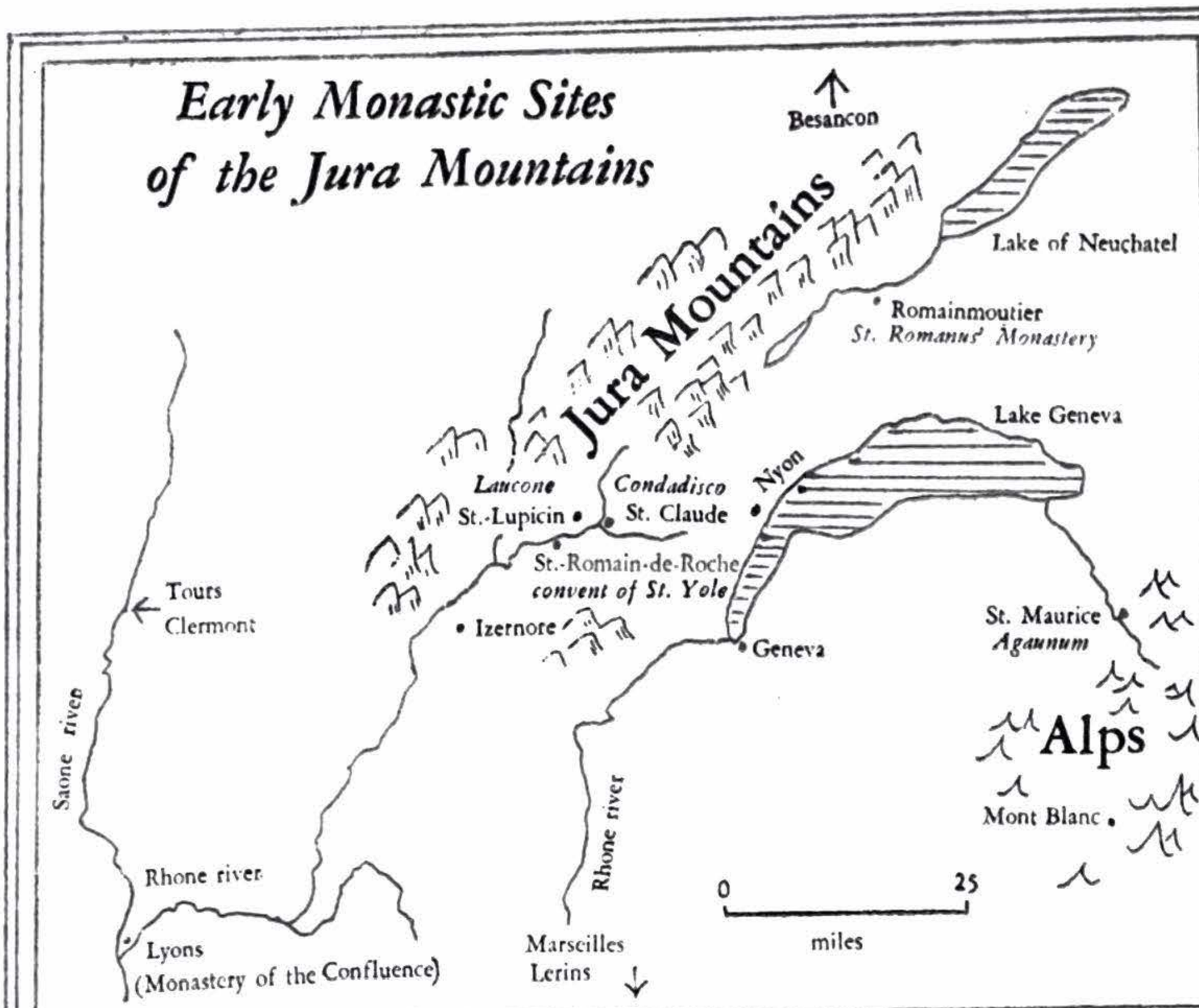
THE LIFE OF

Sts. Romanus and Lupicinus

DESERT-DWELLERS OF THE JURA MOUNTAINS

THE TEXT OF the evangelical teachings informs us that the money entrusted to us by the generosity of the Lord, being committed to bankers can, with God's favor, obtain a just and fruitful increase, and that it should not remain uselessly buried in the earth. Rather, increased by wise use, it serves for the gain of eternal life, so that when the Lord shall inquire concerning the sum He has loaned, upon receiving with satisfaction twice the amount, He will say *Well done, good servant; since thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (Matt. 25:21). Indeed, it belongs to the elect to accomplish these things with the help of God; it belongs to those who from the cradle — as we read about many of them — have merited to know the Lord, and having known Him have never withdrawn from His commandments nor, after the sacrament of Baptism, have ever soiled by shameful acts that precious robe of regeneration white as snow. It is these who properly *follow the Lamb wherever He goeth* (Apoc. 14:4), whom the unequalled brightness of the Lamb Himself has crowned with lilies of glory which no heat of temptation can cause to fade.

It is by means of such crowns, then, that the right hand of the Divine Majesty arouses those who begin, aids those who succeed, adorns the victors whom He has marked beforehand with the seal of His Name, whom He draws



away from the groanings of the earth and raises up, glorious, to the joy of Heaven. In the number of these elect ones white as snow, I do not doubt, are also those men who, traversing the dark places of the wilderness of Jura, have not only merited to become temples of God themselves, but also have set up in many souls tabernacles of the grace of the Holy Spirit — that is, Lupicinus and his brother Romanus.

1. Lupicinus, then from the beginning of his life sought God with all his heart; having learned his letters, when he came of age, being compelled by his father, he was joined in the bond of marriage, although his soul did not consent to it. Romanus, however, was still a youth, and desiring also to consecrate his soul to the work of God, refused marriage. When their parents departed this world, both with common consent thirsted after the wilderness; together they went into the solitudes of the desert of the Jura, between Burgundy and Alemannia and near the region of Avenches; there they fixed their abode, and, prostrate on the earth, each day entreated the Lord with the singing

of their psalmody, seeking food from the roots of plants. But because the jealousy of him who fell from Heaven has the habit of setting snares for the human race, he likewise armed himself against the servants of God and by his agents endeavored to turn them away from the path which they had undertaken. In fact the demons did not cease for one day to overwhelm them with stones, and each time they would bend the knee to pray to the Lord, immediately a rain of stones hurled by the demons would fall upon them, so that often they were injured and endured terrible sufferings.

Then, in their immature years, they began to fear the daily attacks of the enemy, and, unable to endure any longer their sufferings, they decided to abandon the wilderness and return home. What things does the hatred of the enemy not compel one to do? But when, after leaving this abode which they had gone to seek out, they reached inhabited towns, they entered the house of a certain poor man. The wife inquired where the soldiers of Christ were coming from. They replied, not without confusion, that they had left the wilderness, and they revealed to her in detail what had turned them away from their undertaking. Then she replied: "You ought, O men of God, to have fought manfully against the snares of the devil, without fearing the hatred of one who has so often been overcome by the friends of God. For he is jealous of holiness, fearing lest the human race, ennobled by faith, should achieve the heights whence it fell through his faithlessness." Whereupon, touched to the heart, they said to one another, apart from the woman. "Woe to us who have sinned against God by renouncing our intent! See now how we are convicted of indolence by a woman. And what henceforth will be our life if we do not return to the place from which we have been driven away by the malice of the enemy?"

2. Then, armed with the sign of the Cross, staff in hand, they returned to the wilderness. Upon their arrival, once again the treachery of the demon began to overwhelm them with stones; but, persisting in prayer, they obtained from the Lord's mercy to be delivered from temptation and to persevere freely and without hindrance in the service of the Divine worship. Thus, while they devoted themselves to prayer, crowds of brothers began to come to them from all parts to hear the preaching of the word from them. Since the blessed hermits, as we have said, had now become known to people, they founded for themselves a monastery which they wished to be called Condadisco. In this place, the forest once hewn down and levelled, they sought their food from the labor of their own hands. And so much fervor of love for God inflamed those of neighboring regions that the multitude which came together for the worship of God could not all dwell together; thus they founded yet another monastery wherein they installed a swarm from the blessed hive. But the new swarm so

increased thereafter, with God's help, that they established a third monastery in the territory of Alemannia. By turns these two Fathers would go there to visit their sons, whom they had imbued with the divine teachings, preaching in each monastery what pertained to the formation of the soul.

Lupicinus, however, held the rule of abbot over them. He was very sober, abstaining from food and drink to the point of often partaking of them only every three days. When thirst would overpower him, out of the need of the human body, he would have a vessel of water brought, in which he would immerse his hands for a long time. And, O wonder! His flesh would so absorb the water it was placed in that one would have said that he took it by mouth; and thus the heat of thirst would be extinguished. He was most severe in the discipline of the brethren, nor did he permit anyone either to act or even to speak improperly. He carefully avoided both speaking and meeting with women. Romanus, on the other hand, had such simplicity that women did not leave a deep influence on his soul; but to all equally, men or women, he gave the asked-for blessing after invoking the Name of God.

3. It happened, when Abbot Lupicinus had insufficient means wherewith to feed so large a community, that God revealed to him a place in the wilderness where a treasure had long before been hidden. To that place he betook himself alone, and he carried back to the monastery all the gold and silver he could load upon himself; having bought provisions with it, he fed the multitudes of brethren he had gathered for the service of God. He did the same each year. But to none of the brethren did he make known the place which the Lord had vouchsafed to reveal to him.

Now it came to pass that once he visited the brethren assembled, as we have said, in the regions of Alemannia. Toward noon, when the brethren were still in the fields, he entered the house in which the food was being cooked for the meal; there he saw a great preparation of various dishes and a multitude of fish gathered together, and he said within himself, "It is not proper that monks, whose life is one of solitude, should make use of such inappropriate sumptuousness." And immediately he ordered a large cauldron prepared. When, placed on the fire, it began to boil, he threw in together all the dishes they had prepared, fish as well as vegetables and herbs — everything that was intended for the monks' meal — and said, "Let the brethren take their meal now from this pottage instead of abandoning themselves to delicacies which hinder them in the divine work." When the monks learned of this, they took it very ill. Finally, twelve men, having taken counsel together, left that place in the heat of anger and went away, wandering through the solitudes in pursuit of worldly delicacies.

These actions were immediately revealed to Romanus in a vision, for the Divine mercy did not wish to hide from him what had happened. Therefore, when the abbot returned to the monastery, he said to him, "If you had to go in order to disperse the brethren, it were better that you had not gone to them!" Lupicinus answered him, "Be not troubled, most beloved brother, over what has happened. Know that the Lord's threshing-floor has been cleansed: only the wheat has been put in the granary, while the straw has been cast out." "May it not be," replied Romanus, "that any of them depart! But tell me, I pray, how many of them have left?" "Twelve men," answered Lupicinus, "pretentious and proud, in whom God does not dwell." Then Romanus said in tears, "I believe, in light of the Divine mercy, that He will not separate them from His treasury, but that He will gather them and regain those for whom He has deigned to suffer." And having prayed for them, he obtained their return to the grace of Almighty God. The Lord, in fact, touched their hearts and, doing penance for their defection, they each gathered together a community and founded for themselves monasteries which, until today, continue to praise God. As for Romanus, he persevered in simplicity and good works, visiting the sick and healing them by his prayer.

4. Now it happened once, while he was on the way to visit the brethren, that, overtaken by dusk, he turned aside into a little hospice for lepers. There were nine men there. Being welcomed by them, immediately, full of the love of God, he ordered water to be heated, and with his own hands he washed the feet of them all; then he had a spacious bed prepared, in order that all take their rest together in one couch, not fearing the ugly blemish of leprosy. When this had been done, as the lepers slept he kept vigil, chanting psalms; as he was so doing, he stretched out his hand and touched the side of one of the sick men, and he was at that moment cleansed. Repeating this health-giving touch, he touched another, and that one also was immediately cleansed. When they perceived that their health had been restored, each touched his neighbor in order that all might be awakened and ask of the saint their own purification. But when all had been touched in turn, they also were cleansed. When morning came, seeing them all with shining, healthy skin, Romanus gave thanks to God, bade them farewell, giving each a kiss, and went away, ordering them always to keep in their hearts and to practice in their deeds those things which were of God.

5. Once Lupicinus already old, betook himself to the King Chilperic, who at that time ruled over Burgundy, having heard that he was then in the city of Geneva. When he entered the door, the chair of the king, who at that hour was seated at a banquet, trembled. Seized with fear he said to his men,

"There has been an earthquake." Those present replied that they had felt no shock. Then the King said: "Run as quickly as possible to the door, lest perchance there be some enemy there who desires our kingdom or wishes to harm us; for not without reason has this seat been shaken." Running with haste, they found an old man clothed in animal skins; when they told the King of him, the latter said: "Go, bring him before me, that I may know what sort of man he is."

Being brought right away, Lupicinus stood before the King, as once Jacob stood before Pharoah (Gen. 47:7). Chilperic asked him, "Who are you, and where do you come from? What is your occupation? And what necessity makes you come to us? Speak up!" Lupicinus replied: "I am the father of the Lord's sheep; although the Lord arranges that they are given spiritual food by His constant aid, food for the body they sometimes lack. Wherefore we ask Your Majesty to grant them some necessities of food and clothing." Hearing these words, the King said: "Accept fields and vineyards, by which you will be able to live and satisfy your needs." But Lupicinus answered, "We will not accept fields or vineyards, but, if it please Your Majesty, assign us something of their revenue. For it is not fitting for monks to be exalted by worldly abundance, but rather to seek in humility of heart the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." When the King heard these words, he gave an order that each year they receive three hundred measures of wheat and as many of wine, in addition to one hundred gold pieces to buy clothing for the brethren. Until now, it is said, these are given over by the treasury.

6. After this, when they had become old and advanced in years — Lupicinus the abbot, that is, and Romanus his brother — Lupicinus said to his brother, "Tell me, in what monastery do you wish your tomb to be prepared, that we may repose together?" He replied, "It is impossible that I have my tomb in a monastery to which access by women is forbidden. You know indeed that, despite my unworthiness and without merit on my part, the Lord my God has granted me the gift of healing and that many, by the laying on of my hand and by the power of the Cross of the Lord, have been delivered from diverse sicknesses. Many will come to my tomb when I shall have left the light here below. That is why I ask to lie at a distance from the monastery." For this reason, when he died he was buried on a knoll ten thousand steps from the monastery. Afterwards, there was built over his tomb a large church where every day an enormous crowd gathered. And indeed many miracles are manifested there in the Name of God: the blind receive sight there, the deaf hearing, and paralytics the power of walking.

As for Abbot Lupicinus, at his death he was buried within the monastery basilica, and he thus left behind for the Lord talents multiplied from

the money loaned (Matt. 25: 16-17), that is, blessed communities of monks devoted to His praise.

NOTES

A much fuller anonymous Life of these Saints, together with that of their successor, St. Eugendus, has come down to us from about the year 520, some seventy years before St. Gregory's Life *(Vita Patrum Jurensium,* Latin text and French translation in Francois Martine, *Vie des Peres du Jura,* Sources Chretiennes, No. 142, Paris, 1968).

St. Romanus died about 460 and is commemorated on February 28 — the same day as St. John Cassian (in non-leap years), whose *Institutes* he brought with him into the wilderness. St. Lupicinus died about 480 and is commemorated on March 21.

St. Gregory's Life differs in some details from the *Vita Patrum Jurensium.* In particular, the latter states that St. Lupicinus was never married. Perhaps St. Gregory's emphasis of St. Lupicinus as the chief abbot is owing to the reputation which the latter acquired as sole abbot for some twenty years after the death of St. Romanus.

The second monastery which the Saints founded is that of Laucone, where St. Lupicinus more often resided; the third monastery is generally thought to be Romainmoutier in Switzerland.

King Chilperic is probably the King of the Burgundians who reigned in Geneva in 476-477; his daughter was St. Clotilde, wife of King Clovis.

The monastery of Condadisco flourished for many centuries after its foundation. In the Middle Ages it was a wealthy landowner, and its abbots occupied important positions in the feudal society of the West. The monastery was secularized in the 18th century, and its holy things were desecrated in the French Revolution. It is presently the mountain resort town of Saint-Claude. (For its history see Paul Benoit, *Histoire de l'Abbaye et de la Terre de Saint-Claude,* Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1890, 2 vols.)

St. Romanus was buried in the convent which the Saints established for their sister, St. Yole (not mentioned in this Life); the site, several miles from Condadisco, is now the village of St.-Romain-de-roche. St. Lupicinus was buried in Laucone (now the village of St.-Lupicin). Their relics may still be venerated in these places.

Bishop Alexis Bui of Voronezh

AND THE BLESSED FOOL FOR CHRIST'S SAKE THEOKTISTA

THE CITY OF VORONEZH is located in the heart of Holy Russia, not far from the holy monasteries of Optina, Sarov, and Glinsk with their holy elders who handed down the true Orthodox spiritual tradition even to our century.

Voronezh itself is at the center of a diocese which in 1903 counted 18 monasteries, 2500 monks and nuns, over 1000 churches and chapels, and nearly 3000 non-monastic clergy. The spiritual heart of the city was the Annunciation Monastery of St. Metrophanes, which treasured the relics of this great 18th-century saint, the first bishop of Voronezh. Later in the 18th century another great saint was bishop here: St. Tikhon, who ended his days in retirement not far away in the Zadonsk monastery. Another holy man (as yet uncanonized), Anthony, was bishop of Voronezh in the 19th century and was responsible for the canonization of both of his holy predecessors.

Another important monastery in Voronezh was the St. Alexis Monastery, with 30 monks before the Revolution; and the chief women's monastery was the Holy Protection Convent, with 600 sisters.

THE CATACOMB CHURCH IN VORONEZH

I.

After the Revolution of 1917, Voronezh was a leading battlefield in the Civil War, in which many died. From the beginning of the Revolution Voronezh was glorious for its new martyrs, of whom a few may be listed here:

Father George Snesarev, priest of the hospital church of the Sign of the Mother of God in Voronezh, was martyred in 1919. He was scalped (the skin and hair removed from his head) and given 63 wounds. Nails and pins were driven under his fingernails and toenails. He was so mutilated that it was almost impossible to recognize him; his relatives recognized him only by his hands.

In 1919, when the Red Army entered and the White Army left Voronezh, *seven nuns* of the Protection Convent were boiled in a cauldron with tar because they hda a moleben served for members of the White Army.

Hieromonk Nektary (Ivanov), an instructor in the Voronezh Seminary who had graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy, was killed in 1918 by means of various tortures of the cruelest sort: he was dragged by the feet, his arms and legs broken, wooden nails were driven into him, he was "given communion" with molten pewter. The martyr prayed: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Lord."

Archimandrite Dimitry was killed in 1918 after being scalped.

There were other martyrs also in nearby towns.

The chief hierarch of the diocese at this time was Metropolitan Vladimir of Voronezh. In July, 1925, Archbishop Peter (Zverev) was sent to help the ailing Metropolitan, who died at Christmas of the same year. In 1926, on November 15, Archbishop Peter himself served for the last time in Voronezh. The next day he was arrested by the GPU and sent away on a train, and in 1929 he died in Solovki. A number of the letters from Solovki of this holy new martyr have survived (Polsky, vol. 2, pp. 56-66).

II.

After the departure of Archbishop Peter, Bishop Alexis (Bui), a vicar-bishop of the Voronezh diocese, took over the administration of the diocese. Bishop Alexis was tall and thin, an inspired preacher, a great faster and a true monk. He did not have a theological education, and had been Superior of a monastery in Kozlov. He celebrated the Divine services with heedful concentration.

This was a very difficult time, in Voronezh as in the whole of Russia. The Revolution had brought profound anarchy and disturbance; the persecution of the Church went on unabated, and the secret police used every conceivable trick in order to trap people into "illegal" actions or statements. In Voronezh the GPU did its best to arouse disagreements between members of the clergy in order to use the words of the disputants, as reported by spies, as accusations against them. At the same time, Holy Russia was still alive, and there were still holy people as in earlier centuries; in Voronezh there was the holy woman Theoktista Michaelovna (see below).

BISHOP ALEXIS BUI OF VORONEZH

Just at this time, in mid-1927, the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius was published, and Voronezh was divided like the rest of Russia. All eyes were on Bishop Alexis, and he responded with a bold rejection of the Declaration and his announcement that he had chosen to be a follower of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd.

This Epistle was signed also by six of the leading priests of Voronezh: Archpriests John Andreyevsky, Nicholas Piskanovsky, Peter Novosiltsev, Paul Smirnsky, Alexander Philippenko, and John Steblin-Kamensky. These brave priests suffered for this in the folowing ways:

Archpriest John Andreyevsky had an immense significance in the support of Orthodoxy in Voronezh. First he rose up against Renovationism, then he disagreed with Metropolitan Sergius. He was arrested in 1928 and exiled to Central Asia. When Bishop Alexis heard of his arrest, he came the same day fearlessly to the church where the priest had been serving and comforted his grieving flock. After returning from exile, Father John disappeared from sight and was not heard of again.

Archpriest Nicholas Piskanovsky was arrested and sent to Solovki, where he remained from 1928 to his death, probably in 1932. He made fishing nets there, while saying the Jesus Prayer constantly. He was the spiritual father of the whole of the Catacomb clergy and faithful in the Solovki concentration camp. All the bishops on Solovki who refused to accept the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius had great respect for him, and he was loved by everyone for his kindness, responsiveness, constant calmness of soul, and his ability to give consolation to those in every kind of grief.

Archpriest Alexander Philippenko was first arrested and exiled in 1926, at which time almost all members of his family died of hunger. Finding himself in Voronezh in 1927, he joined those who opposed the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius. Soon he accepted monasticism and was made an archimandrite. Later he lived illegally in Michurinsk (Kozlov), working as a maker of brick stoves, and served in the Catacomb Church.

Archpriest John Steblin-Kamensky suffered in the Solovki camp from 1924 to 1927. He became a celibate priest after a career as a naval officer. He was arrested again in 1929; his letter to his flock from prison in 1929 has been preserved (Polsky, vol. 2, pp. 191-193), and is a document reminiscent of the epistles of love of the apostolic fathers of the ancient catacomb church.

All the remaining clergy of Voronezh who disagreed with Metropolitan Sergius were arrested in 1930; the monks of the St. Alexis and St. Metrophanes monasteries especially suffered at this time.

The St. Alexis monastery, until its closure after Pascha in 1931, was a center for local and travelling clergy of the old "Tikhonite" Orthodox outlook who opposed Renovationism and then Sergianism. No other church of this outlook remained.

After the closure of the St. Alexis monastery and the annihilation of its clergy, the part of the populace that was faithful to its shepherds and their outlook remained totally without churches and Divine services, not wishing to go to the open Sergianist churches. Secret priests would come rarely and by chance and would celebrate services in homes. Only trusted people of the same outlook knew about this, and they would tell others of like mind about the service. The priest would serve at night and then hide in a storehouse or barn, and when night would come he would leave for somewhere else. During the services the people would sing quietly and watch through the window in case someone should come. If there was a knock, first of all they would hide the priest and then open the door. There were cases when those in charge of the house did not know that there was a service, for they would be performed when they would go away to work. Some participants of the underground Church in Russia who came abroad in 1943 entered a church then for the first time in thirteen years.

For his Epistle Bishop Alexis was placed under suspension by Metropolitan Sergius, and then on February 21, 1930, was arrested by the GPU, dying in prison.

Concerning the latter days of Bishop Alexis' life, we have the memoirs of the recently-reposed Archpriest Sergei Shukin, who thus recalls his encounter with him:

"In the summer of 1936 we were sent by convoy to the Ukhto-Pechersk concentration camp (in the far north). The transfer took almost a whole month, since every two or three days we had a stop at the following point: Kharkov, Orel, Syzran, Vyatka, and Kotlas. In Kotlas the railroad ended and we were conducted further on barges along the Northern Dvina and Vychegda to the harbor of Ust-Vym. From there we were taken on camp trucks to the various camp points.

"At first on this convoy there were no clergymen; it was a mixture of political and criminal exiles. But at each stop our convoy changed — some left, others were added. And at Syzran we were joined by Archbishop Alexis, formerly of Voronezh and Kozlov. He was an old bishop, about 65 years old, tall and of a large build, with an unhealthy color in his face. But the most extraordinary thing was that Vladika was carrying with him two large and heavy suitcases. He could not carry them himself, and therefore he had to have help from others. The other people in the convoy had only a single bundle with dry bread

and clothes, so as not to attract the attention of the criminals. But the important thing was that each carried his bundle himself and put it under his head at night.

"It was quite natural that the appearance of Vladika with two suitcases became of immediate interest to the criminals in our cell. My companions and I made the acquaintance of the Archbishop and advised him to be careful, especially at night, when the criminals went hunting for other people's things. But Vladika did not feel well and, shrugging his shoulders, replied: 'What can I do? Let them take them . . . All the same I will sleep at night.' Then we decided that we would take turns at night and watch over Vladika's suitcases . . . The criminals were very dissatisfied with this turn of events and in the morning did not conceal their anger, but God preserved us from trouble. . .

"The same evening we were brought to the station for the further journey. Such transfers the NKVD always arranges at night, so as not to attract the attention of the local inhabitants. My companions carried Vladika's suitcases and we were loaded into one of the compartments of a "Stolypin" wagon. . .

"Under the Tsarist government people in such convoys received hot food twice a day, but under the Soviets they were given only a "dry ration": 400 grams of black bread, 20 grams of sugar, and a piece of herring. Water was given only twice a day, morning and evening. Therefore, receiving in the morning a cup of water and after this some salted fish, those in the convoy were tormented with thirst the whole day.

"The whole way Vladika Alexis lay and dozed. He spoke little and rarely; it was evident that he felt ill, and he ate nothing. Of course, both the wagon and the surroundings acted on him in an oppressive manner. The next day, when we arrived at the station of Kotlas, we were separated from Vladika. Although he was heading for the same Ukhte-Pechersk camp, he was put in a different transfer barracks and we didn't see him again.

"Judging by the physical condition of Vladika Alexis, the camp regimen was beyond his strength. He could not work, and therefore he could expect the worst ration: 300 grams of bread and once a day a watery soup. Even if people could have sent him food parcels, it wouldn't have been right away, until he could let them know his address. Even if he had been sent to the camp hospital, there he would not have received any treatment at all, since there were no medicines whatever. There was no thought given to the diet of prisoners, either; the food was the most crude and monotonous. One has to suppose that Vladika could not survive long in such conditions. Such was the camp system of the NKVD in order to deliver them from those incapable of work. . ."

The influence of Bishop Alexis on the future development of the True-Orthodox or Catacomb Church in Russia was considerable; Soviet re-

searchers make him out to be the founder of a "sect," called the "Buevtsy" ("Bui-ites"). One recent book on underground Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union gives a general summary, taken from Soviet sources, of this movement (which is obviously only the local part of the larger "Josephite" or Catacomb movement) which can be traced for some twenty years after the arrest of Bishop Alexis:*

"Soviet scholarship has, by chance as it were, provided fairly detailed information on one of the branches of the Josephites which provides considerable insight into the nature of the movement. The Buevtsy organization arose in the Tambov area in response to the events of 1927, led by Bishop Aleksii (Bui) of Voronezh, and was affiliated with the larger Josephite movement . . . The movement which was begun by Bishop Aleksii and which became known by his (secular) name, the Buevtsy, formed a part of that congeries of similar movements more or less united under the wing of the Josephite schism. Inasmuch as the Buevtsy movement maintained its identity, however, and exerted an historical influence of its own, it may also be considered separately.

"The Buevtsy movement appeared to be primarily a local movement centered in Voronezh and with its influence concentrated in the surrounding area. According to Soviet research, however, it did have direct links in many other regions as well. Organizationally, the movement appears to have been relatively sophisticated and well founded . . . The size of the movement is difficult to determine, but apparently it was relatively substantial, well able to attract adherents. . . Soviet researchers thirty years later had discovered traces of some forty congregations with a general membership of over 700 belonging to the Buevtsy movement in 1930. In view of the peculiar circumstances necessitated by clandestine Church life, however, it is difficult to imagine that Soviet historical research was able to identify more than a fraction of the adherents of a movement such as this, and these figures may indeed be without much value in estimating the size, strength, and influence of the movement.

"Bui himself was arrested on 21 February 1930, but it would not appear that the arrest of the movement's titular head seriously impeded the progress of the Buevtsy. For the next three years at least, they continued their activity with great vigor, and for the following decade their influence continued to be felt" (pp. 69-71).

"Although its organizational center was in Voronezh, it enjoyed great success in the regions surrounding Tambov, 100 miles to the northeast, and, indeed, was active over a wide area of the Caucasus and the Ukraine. . .

* William C. Fletcher, *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground,* London, Oxford University Press.

"Apparently there was a fierce attack against the movement, which resulted in the conviction of its leaders and the dissolution of its organizational structure in 1930 or 1931 . . . After this initial attack the movement was reorganized by a subordinate and, again according to Soviet investigators, had a following of some 200 people in 1932. The Soviet academician Mitrokhin states that 'at the end of 1932 the organization of the Buevtsy ended its existence and its most active worker were convicted of anti-Soviet activity,' but goes on to state that its adherents, despite the alleged destruction of the movement's organization, conducted anti-Soviet agitation during the election campaign in 1939. . .

"During the collectivization campaign, the Buevtsy, like cognate movements throughout the country, conducted vigorous agitation against the *Kolkhozes* (collective farms) . . . Because the number of churches which the Buevtsy could utilize was far from adequate, a cult of informal shrines sprang up, thus giving the movement the advantage of locales which could attract people from numerous villages without the disadvantages of a fixed location, such as a normal church, which would be more susceptible to police pressure . . . Eschatology played a considerable role in the doctrine of the Buevtsy. Subsequent Soviet scholarship suggests that this eschatalogical motif was intertwined with definite aspirations towards engineering a restoration of the monarchy" (pp. 107-109).

Later, "the Buevtsy organization embraced a number of people who subsequently became leaders of the True Orthodox Church, and even after this movement had been liquidated as an organization, these members continued their underground Orthodox activity throughout the decade of the thirties." Further, according to the Soviet source (Mitrokhin) utilized by this book, "this very organization (Buevtsy) served both in idea and in its organizational relationship as the starting point for the followers of the True Orthodox Church in 1946-1952. Among the workers of the True Orthodox Church at this time we continually meet either active Buevtsy or people who at one time had been connected with them" (pp. 181-182).

Thus, Soviet sources themselves confirm the continuity of the courageous stand of Bishop Alexis in 1927 with the later True Orthodox Church which, as we know from many other sources, continues to the present day, just as persecuted and hidden as ever.

(*To be continued.*)

News of the Catacomb Church in Russia, 1976

(As reported in the Russian publication *Nasha Strana,* Buenos Aires, April 26, 1977, p. 3, and *Religion and Atheism in the USSR, July 1976, no. 8, pp. 18-19.)*

IN THE SOVIET UNION it is not allowed to take out of the country the provincial newspapers of the "autonomous republics" or of districts or counties But the information to be found in such local newspapers is usually much more interesting and significant than the "official" news printed in the Moscow newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* or than the sensational declarations of many of the "dissidents" in the capital.

According to the account of the Moscow correspondent of the Reuters news service (May 13, 1976), the newspaper *Soviet Abhazia* (published in the city of Sukhumi) has reported the trial and judgment of a priest of the True-Orthodox (Catacomb) Church of Russia, Archimandrite Gennady (Gregory Sekach in the world), in connection with the uncovering of a large and highly organized part of the Catacomb Church's activity in the south of Russia.

According to *Soviet Abhazia,* Gregory Sekach was converted to the faith during the Second World War. He later attended and completed a seminary course and served for some time as an officially-registered priest (non-monastic) of the Moscow Patriarchate. Being a conscientious priest, however, he inevitably came into conflict with the church authorities, themselves under the pressure of the officials of the atheist regime, and in 1962 — at the height

of the Khrushchev persecution — he was accused of violating the Soviet laws concerning religious "cults" (specifically, "for attracting children and young people to church") and was deprived of his parish and official registration as a priest.

After this, Father Gregory "disappeared" from Soviet life and went literally into the catacombs. He entered into contact with the True-Orthodox Church, which had continued to exist as an underground body for all the years since the time of Metropolitan Joseph and the other confessing bishops of 1927, having no contact at all with the Communist-dominated Moscow Patriarchate. In two years of underground activity Father Gregory built up a catacomb parish in one of the cities of the Ukraine, and here also he received the monastic tonsure with the name of Gennady. A certain Bishop Seraphim of the Catacomb Church raised Hieromonk Gennady to the rank of Archimandrite and sent him to the republic of Abhazia, to the industrial city of Tkvarcheli in the region of "New Athos" on the shore of the Black Sea, the site of the famous metochion of the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mt. Athos which was destroyed by the Soviets in 1924. *Soviet Abhazia* admits that the Soviet authorities were unable to discover anything about this Bishop Seraphim, who apparently continues his catacomb activity.

Here in ten years, from 1966 to 1976, Father Gennady managed to organize several secret communities of the Catacomb Church, to build for them a whole series of secret house churches in private dwellings, and to form several monasteries for men and women as well as a secret theological school.

Father Gennady's helpers, as the Soviet newspaper relates, travelled throughout the Soviet Union in order to meet with secret groups of believers. These helpers "recruited" many young men and women into their ranks and brought them back to Abhazia, where they were settled in various industrial and factory jobs in Tkvarcheli and in the evening attended the underground theological courses. Many of these young people received the monastic tonsure and returned to their native places to conduct religious activity among the people there.

This activity was uncovered by the Soviet authorities in 1976 with the arrest of Archimandrite Gennady, who was betrayed by an informer. His collaborators and helpers were not caught, but Archimandrite Gennady himself was sentenced to four years in a forced-labor camp. *Soviet Abhazia* ascribes to these activists of the Catacomb Church an extreme fanaticism and an anti-Soviet political activity (manifested in the distribution of anti-Soviet leaflets).

All this, of course, is only an account of an article in a Soviet newspaper (and even the article itself seems not to have been brought out of the Soviet Union: therefore it is impossible to give any precise evaluation of all these details. The general picture, however, both from this account and from other reports from Soviet sources and from new emigrants to the West, is clear: the activity of the Catacomb True-Orthodox Church continues in Russia, attaining at times a remarkable degree of organized activity (considering the cruel Soviet circumstances, where it is a crime against the State to worship secretly and not at officially-tolerated churches), and having the ability to preserve its members from arrest even when an important center of its activity has been uncovered. As long as the Soviet tyranny will continue in power, we will probably receive no more than hints, such as this article contains, about the actual life of the Catacomb Church in Russia. It is obvious that when freedom returns to Russia, much about this secret life will be revealed that is scarcely even suggested today.

Bishop Seraphim is only the second member of the present-day hierarchy of the Catacomb Church to be publicly known in the West by name (the other being Metropolitan Theodosius, the present chief hierarch of the Catacomb Church). Interestingly, from the earlier history of the Catacomb Church in Russia (which is much better known to us than the post-World War II era) we know of a Seraphim who would, in fact, probably be a bishop today if he is still alive (he was born in 1903). This is the clairvoyant elder, Hieromonk Seraphim, before whom an Optina monk prophetically bowed down and took a priest's blessing when the elder was only five years old; we know of the catacomb activity of this Father Seraphim in 1941, when he pastured a flock in the literal underground, going from town to town and miraculously escaping detection by the Secret Police, who were constantly looking for him.* Perhaps one day we will know whether today's Bishop Seraphim is this very offspring of Optina Monastery and its tradition of elders, keeping Holy Russia alive even under the reign of godlessness.

Undoubtedly Father Gennady, in accord with Soviet practice, is being subjected to cruel treatment and tortures, both in order to make him reveal the names of other members of the Catacomb Church, and in general as a punishment for his "crimes" against the Soviet State. All Orthodox Christians who care for their suffering brethren should offer up fervent prayers for his well-being and salvation.

* See *The Orthodox Word,* July-August, 1971, pp. 186-188.

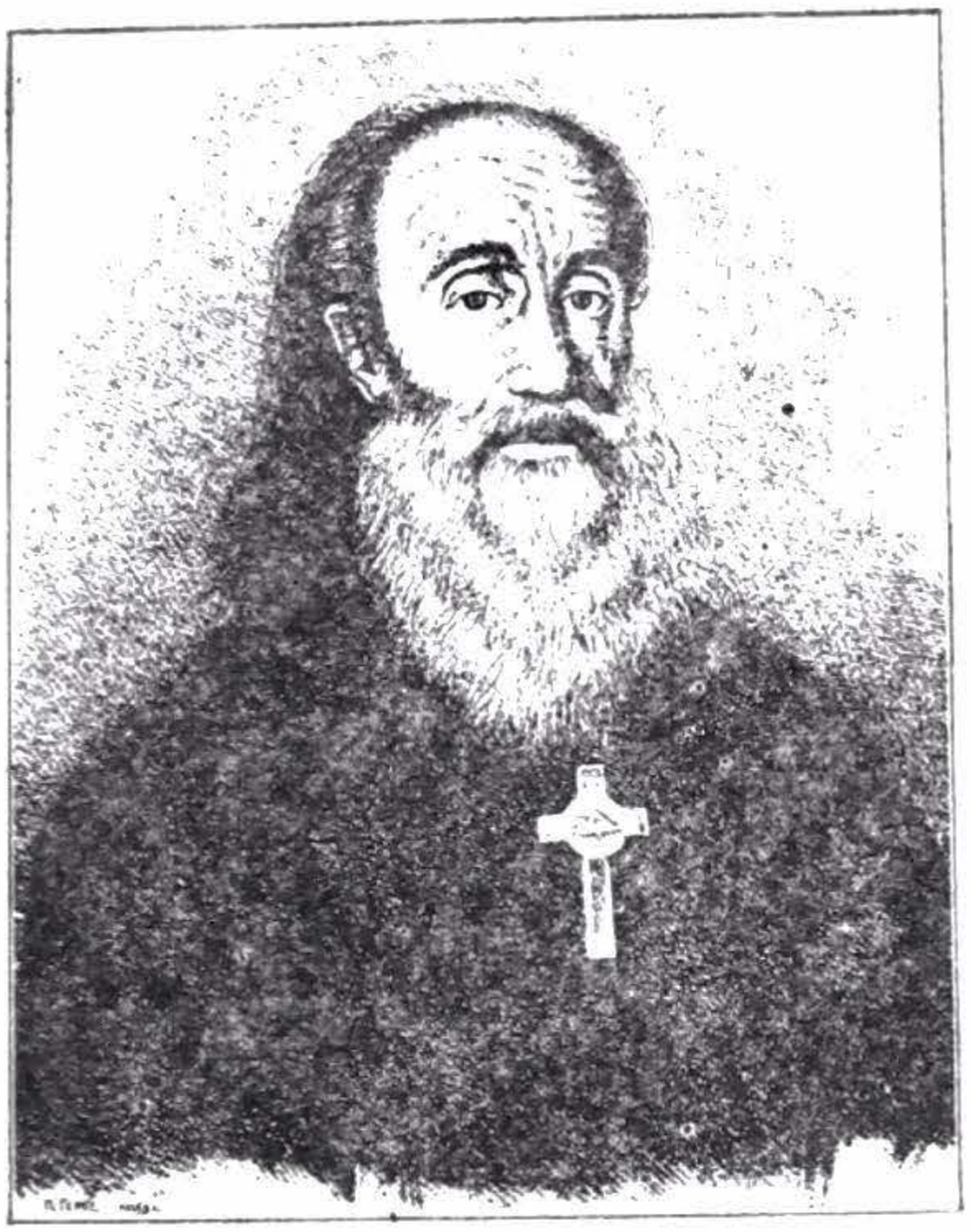
The Life and Ascetic Labors of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Part Nineteen.

The Philokalia

78. ELDER THEOPHANES FROM TISMAN

METROPOLITAN GABRIEL of Novgorod and Petersburg (1730-1801), in all his actions towards the restoration of previously closed monasteries, such as Valaam, Konevits, Tikhvin, St. Cyril of New Lake, etc., had a devoted and trustworthy helper, Archimandrite Theophanes Sokolov (1752-1832), who was well known for his piety and spiritual experience, acquired by him first in Sarov and Sanaxar monasteries. After the unjust expulsion of his Elder Theodore from Sanaxar, Theophanes went south to Blessed Paisius, about whom he knew much from his Elder Theodore, whom he had accompanied when the latter had gone to see St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. When Theophanes reached Tisman Monastery and rested there in order to resume his travelling to Paisius, the Abbot of that monastery, Theodosius, detained him. Father Theodosius was Paisius' spiritual brother, and was the successor to their common Elder Basil of Merlopolyany. Here Theophanes learned of the death of Paisius and joined the brotherhood of Tisman Monastery. Later he was sent north as a travelling companion to Father Anastasius Potemkin, son of the renowned General. Father Anastasius, a holy monk, was truly a worthy Paisian disciple; he secretly left his palaces and glory in exchange for years of unrecognized severe ascetic labors, ending his life as a Bishop.

When Father Theophanes reached Petersburg, he was joined to the monks of St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra and soon became cell attendant to Metropolitan Gabriel, who at once recognized the spiritual value of this humble monk.



Elder Philaret

Archimandrite Theophanes

ARCHIMANDRITE THEOPHANES OF NEW LAKE MONASTERY

Dec. 3, 1832

Originally a disciple of Theodore of Sanaxar, Theophanes carried the Paisian tradition North where, as Metr. Gabriel's cell attendant, he encouraged him to publish the Paisian Philokalia and to send the first mission to America.

The fact that Fr. Theophanes knew personally great Fathers, both of the Sarov forests and from among the disciples of Blessed Paisius, gave Metropolitan Gabriel an excellent opportunity to place holy men of spiritual experience as Abbots of the reestablished monasteries. Thus, Valaam was revived by Blessed Nazarius of Sarov; Konevits by Alexis (Adrian), the holy desert-dweller from Roslavl. Father Macarius of Pesnosha came from Sanaxar to the Moscow region

and in turn gave twenty-five of his disciples as Abbots to revive various old renowned monasteries; he providentially inherited Paisius' abbatial staff. And Elder Theodore of Sanaxar was released from exile thanks also to Fr. Theophanes' intercession.

Even the sending to distant Alaska of the first American Orthodox mission was done not without Fr. Theophanes' involvement, for we know from the letter of his close friend, St. Herman of Alaska, that the latter asked Metrpolitan Gabriel to send Theophanes himself as the first Bishop to America.

79. METROPOLITAN GABRIEL*

METROPOLITAN GABRIEL, in order to help the monastic coenobitic life which was being restored in many monasteries, desired to publish the Slavonic translation of the Philokalia from the Greek language which had been made by the Elder Paisius Velichkovsky, whom he greatly respected. Many times he entreated Elder Paisius concerning this. Paisius for a long time hesitated and could not decide to do this, partly out of a feeling of humility, and partly out of a fear of causing people to falsely interpret the insructions of the Philokalia concerning spiritual life and mental prayer. Finally, Paisius' disciple Athanasius brought to the Metropolitan the Greek original and Elder Paisius' translation. Apart from the Philokalia, Paisius also translated the book of St. Isaac the Syrian. This translation was printed in Moldavia, but in manuscript form (the second half of which was written out by Paisius himself, and was later treasured in Optina Monastery) it was sent to Metropolitan Gabriel with this inscription:

This my translation of this book I offer as a gift to Your Eminence, great Lord, Kyr Gabriel, Metropolitan of Great Novgorod and St. Petersburg, and mentally I bow down before your holy footsteps and kiss your blessing hand, most humbly begging you to accept this my work of translation with benevolence and to send down upon me the least one and upon our brethren your most merciful Archpastoral blessing.

Paisius Velichkovsky, native of Poltava, who labored on this translation, Abbot of the Ascension Monastery of Niamets and the Sekoul Monastery of St. John the Forerunner in Moldavia.

* This chapter is from pp. 75-79 of the biography of Metropolitan Gabriel by Archimandrite Makary, Petersburg, 1857.

ΦΙΛΟΚΑΛΙΑ

ΤΩΝ ΓΕΡΩΝ

ΝΗΠΤΙΚΩΝ·

ΣΥΝΕΡΑΝΙΣΘΕΙΣΑ

ΠΑΡΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΦΟΡΩΝ

ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ ΗΜΩΝ

ΕΝ Η',

Διά τῆς ἐξ ἔτους Πράξεως καὶ Θεωρίας Ἠθικῆς Φιλοσοφίας ὁ τοὺς καθαίρεται, φωτίζεται, καὶ τελειοῦται

ΕΠΙΜΕΛΕΙΑΙΣ ΜΕΝ ΤΩΝ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΤΕΡΩΝ ΔΙΟΡΘΩΘΕΙΣΑ·

ΝΥΝ ΔΕ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΤΥΠΟΙΣ ΕΚΔΟΘΕΙΣΑ

ΔΙΑ ΔΑΠΑΝΗΣ

ΤΟΥ ΤΙΜΙΩΤΑΤΟΥ, ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΣΕΒΕΣΤΑΤΟΥ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ

ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΜΑΥΡΟΓΟΡΔΑΤΟΥ

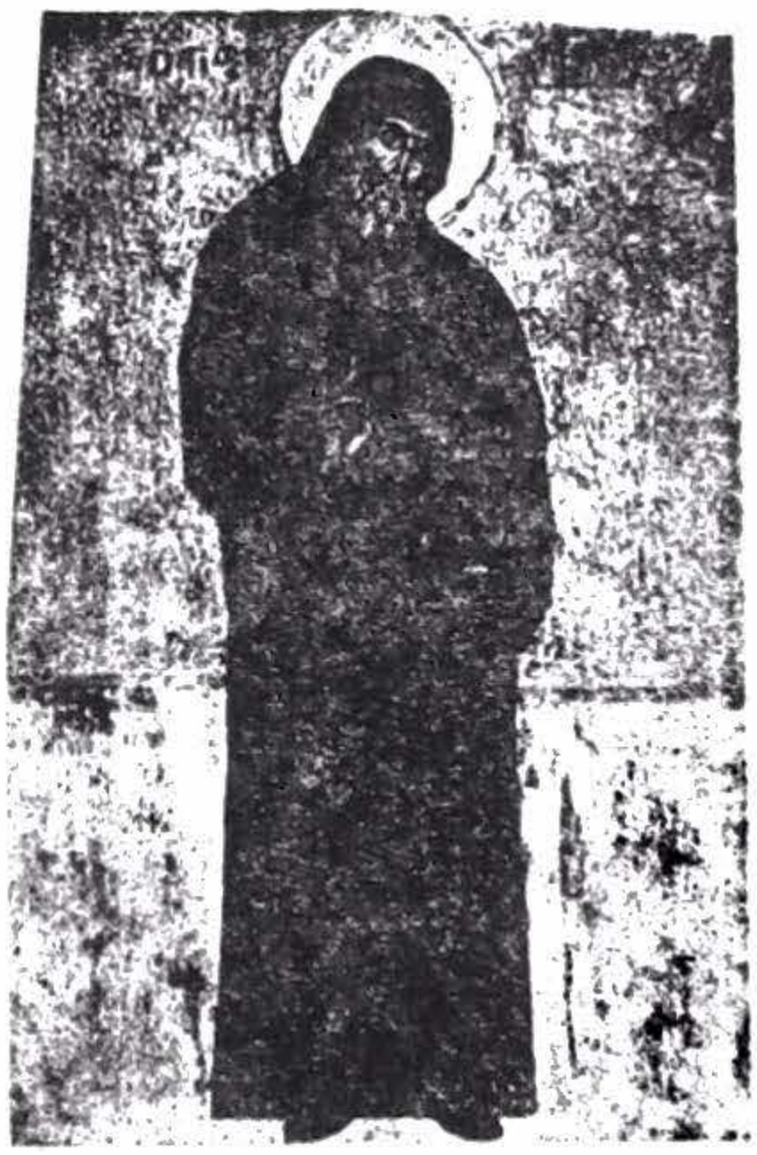
ΕΙΣ ΚΟΙΝΗΝ ΤΩΝ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΩΝ Ω'ΦΕΛΕΙΑΝ.

ΑΩΠΒ. ΕΝΕΤΙΗΣΙΝ. 1782.

ΠΑΡΑ ΑΝΤΩΝΙΩ ΤΟ ΒΟΡΤΟΛΙ.

CON LICENZA DE' SUPERIORI, E PRIVILEGIO.

The title page of the first printed edition of the Greek Philokalia, 1782, which was inspired by the example of the patristic labors of Blessed Paisius.



St. Macarius of Corinth
Two portraits from life

The Philokalia

Metropolitan Gabriel, having received from Elder Paisius from Moldavia the translation of the book, the Philokalia, chose Father Theophanes as one of the advisors together with the scholars of the seminary of St. Alexander Nevsky. To them he entrusted this translation, because in this work was required not only a precise knowledge of the Greek language, but also a faithful and experienced understanding of spiritual life. Those who labored in the comparison of the translation of this book with the Greek original, according to the Metropolitan's instructions, were obliged to constantly take counsel concerning all necessary corrections with spiritual elders who had actual experience in conducting their spiritual lives in accordance with this exalted teaching set forth in the Philokalia. These elders with whom they were to consult were: Elder Nazarius, Abbot of Valaam monastery; Hieromonk Philaret, who originally had been summoned by Metropolitan Gabriel from Sarov monastery to come to Petersburg (and later became the renowned elder of Spassky Monastery in Moscow and spiritual father of the philosopher Ivan V. Kireyevsky and his wife Natalia); and also Athanasius, who brought into Russia the Greek original of the Philokalia. The Metropolitan would say to the learned translators, "Although they do not know the Greek language as well as you, they know better than you from experience the spiritual truths which cannot be understood by book-learning alone. Therefore they can understand better than you the meaning of the instructions contained in this book" The translation once made was given for another examination and correction to the teacher of the Greek language in the Trinity — St. Sergius Academy, Jacob Dimitievich Nikolsky, who was later protopresbyter in the Moscow cathedral of the Dormition. The translation was corrected by him in the places which were difficult to understand, and was printed in Moscow Synodal printshop for the first time in 1793.

As for the Metropolitan's cell attendant Theophanes, he, having received the good will of the Metropolitan, left the Lavra in 1791 to become Abbot of the Modensk monastery in Novgorod, and, in 1797, of the St. Cyril of New Lake monastery, where he lived until his death. He did not forget the benefactions of Metropolitan Gabriel to the end of his life. He died on December 3, 1832, in the 81st year of his life. A short account of the life of blessed Theophanes, Archimandrite of the St. Cyril of New Lake monastery, was published in Moscow in 1853.

The activity of Metropolitan Gabriel in establishing monasteries and in introducing strict monastic life in them did not distract him from scholarly labors. The proof of this are his significant labors for the preservation of true Orthodox scholarship and piety in the Petersburg Theological Academy.

Next: The Daily Life of Paisian Monks.

THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

CONTEMPORARY "AFTER-DEATH" EXPERIENCES IN THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOX TEACHING ON THE AFTERLIFE

3. THE "BEING OF LIGHT"

(Continued)

Now let us turn to the encounter with angels in the actual after-death experiences of Orthodox Christians.

In these experiences the newly-deceased is usually met by two angels. This is how the author of "Unbelievable for Many" describes them: "Hardly had the old nurse uttered these words ('May he inherit the Kingdom of Heaven!'), than two angels appeared at my side; for some reason in one of them I recognized my Guardian Angel, but the other was unknown to me" (p. 22) (Later a pious wanderer told him that this was the "meeting angel".) St. Theodora, whose journey after death through the aerial "toll-houses" is related in the Life of St. Basil the New (10th century, March 26), related that "when I was at the end of my strength, I suddenly saw two radiant angels of God, who were like splendid youths of inexpressible beauty. Their faces were brighter than the sun, their gaze was full of love, the hair of their head was white like snow, around their heads a golden radiance was poured out, their garments glistened like lightning and were girded about the chest with golden sashes in cross-form" (see translation in *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave,* p. 70). The 6th-century bishop of Gaul, St. Salvius, thus describes his own death experience: "When my cell shook four days ago, and you saw me lying dead, I was raised up by two angels and carried to the highest peak of heaven" (St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks,* VII, 1; see the life of St. Salvius in *The Orthodox Word,* 1977, no. 5).

The mission of these angels is to take the soul of the newly-reposed on its journey into the afterlife. There is noth-

ing vague about them, either in appearance or action; having a human appearance, they firmly grasp the "subtle body" of the soul and conduct it away. "The light-bearing angels immediately took my soul in their arms" (St. Theodora, see *Eternal Mysteries,* p. 71). "Having taken me by the arms, the angels carried me right through the wall of the ward . . ." ("Unbelievable for Many," p. 22). St. Salvius was "raised up by two angels." Such examples could be multiplied.

It cannot be asserted, therefore, that the "being of light" in today's experiences — who has no visible form, who does not conduct the soul anywhere, who stops to engage the soul in dialogue and shows "flashbacks" of one's past life — is a guiding angel of the afterlife. Not every being that *appears* as an angel is such in fact, for *even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light* (II Cor. 11:14); and so these beings without even the *appearance* of angels can certainly not be identified as such. Unmistakable encounters with angels seem almost never to occur in today's "after-death" experiences — for a reason we shall attempt to explain below.

Is it possible, then, that the "being of light" is actually a demon masquerading as a formless "angel of light" in order to tempt the dying even at the moment when the soul is leaving the body? Dr. Moody *(Life After Life,* pp. 107-8; *Reflections,* pp. 58-60) and other investigators actually raise this question, only to dismiss the possibility as not in harmony with the "good" results the apparition produces in the dying. To be sure, the views of "evil" of such investigators are naive in the extreme; Dr. Moody thinks that "Satan would presumably tell his servants to follow a course of hate and destruction" (*Life After Life,* p. 108) and seems to be totally unaware of the Christian literature which describes the actual nature of demonic temptations, which invariably are presented to their victims as something "good."

What, then, is the Orthodox teaching about demonic temptations at the hour of death? St. Basil the Great, in his interpretation of the words of the Psalm *Save me from them that persecute me, and do Thou deliver me lest at any time like a lion he seize my soul* (Ps. 7:1-2), offers this explanation: "I think that the noble athletes of God who have wrestled considerably with the invisible enemies during the

whole of their lives, after they have escaped all of their persecutions and reached the end of their life, are examined by the prince of this world in order that, if they are found to have wounds from wrestling or any stains or effects of sin, they may be detained. But, if they are found unwounded and sinless, they may be brought by Christ into their rest as being unconquered and free. Therefore, the Prophet prays both for his life here and for his future life. Here he says: *Save me from them that persecute me,* and there, at the time of trial: *Deliver me, lest at any time like a lion he seize my soul.* And this you can learn from the Lord Himself, Who before His suffering said: *Now the prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in Me (John 14:30)"* (St. Basil, *Exegtic Homilies,* Catholic University of America Press, 1963, pp. 167-168).

Indeed, it is not only Christian strugglers who have to face the testing by demons at the hour of death. St. John Chrysostom, in his Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew, vividly describes what often happens to ordinary sinners at their death. "Most persons may be then heard relating horrors, and fearful visions, the spectacle of which the dying are unable to endure, but often shake their very bed with great power, gaze fearfully on the bystanders, the soul urging itself inwards, unwilling to be torn away from the body, and unable to bear the sight of the approaching angels. If human beings that are frightful strike terror into us beholding them, when we see angels threatening, and stern powers, among our visitors, what shall we not suffer, the soul being forced from the body, and dragged away, and bewailing much, all in vain?" (Homily 53 on St. Matthew, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Eerdmans edition, 1973, vol. 10, pp. 331-32.)

The Orthodox Lives of Saints have numerous accounts of such demonic spectacles which appear at the moment of death, usually with the aim of frightening the dying person and making him despair over his salvation. St. Gregory in his *Dialogues,* for example, tells of a certain rich man who was a slave to numerous passions: "A short time before he died, he saw hideous spirits standing before him, threatening fiercely

to carry him to the depths of hell . . . The entire family gathered round, weeping and lamenting. Though they could not actually see the evil spirits and their horrible attacks, they could tell from the sick man's own declarations, from the pallor on his face and from his trembling body, that the evil spirits were present. In mortal terror of these horrible images, he kept tossing from side to side on his bed . . . And now, nearly worn out and despairing of any relief, he shouted, 'Give me time until morning! Hold off at least until morning!' With that his life was snatched away" (*Dialogues* IV, 40, pp. 245-6). St. Gregory reports other similar incidents, as does Bede in his *History of the English Church and People* (Book V, Chs. 13, 15). Even in 19th-century America such experiences were not at all uncommon; a recent anthology contains numerous 19th-century death-bed visions of unrepentant sinners with such titles as "I am in the flames — pull me out!", "Oh save me! They drag me down!", "I am going to hell!", and "The devil is coming to drag my soul down to hell!" (John Myers, *Voices from the Edge of Eternity,* Spire Books, Old Tappan, N.J., 1973, pp. 71, 109, 167, 196, etc.)

Dr. Moody however, records nothing whatsoever like this: virtually all the experiences of the dying in his book (with the notable exception of suicides, see pp. 127-8) are pleasant ones, whether the people are Christian or non-Christian, religious or not. Drs. Osis and Haraldsson, on the other hand, found something not too far from this experience in their studies.

These researchers found, in their American study, the same results as Dr. Moody: the apparition of other-worldly visitors is seen to be something positive, the patient accepts death, the experience is pleasant, causing serenity or elation and often the cessation of pain before dying. In the Indian study, however, fully one-third of the patients who saw apparitions have an experience of fear, depression and anxiety resulting from the apparition of the "yamdoots" (Hindu messengers of death) or other beings; these Indians resist and try to escape the other-worldly messengers. Thus in one experience, an Indian clerical worker related as he was dying:

"'Someone is standing there! He has a cart with him so he must be a yamdoot! He must be taking someone with him. He is teasing me that he is going to take me! . . . Please hold me; I am not going.' His pain increased and he died" (*At the Hour of Death,* p. 90). One dying Hindu "suddenly said: 'Yamdoot is coming to take me away. Take me down from the bed so that Yamdoot does not find me.' He pointed outwards and upwards. 'There he is.' This hospital room was on a ground floor. Outside, at the wall of the building, there was a large tree with a great number of crows sitting on its branches. Just as the patient had his vision, all the crows suddenly flew away from the tree with much noise, as if someone had fired a gun. We were very surprised by this and ran outside through an open door in the room, but we saw nothing that might have disturbed the crows. They were usually peaceful, so it was very memorable to all of us present when the crows flew away with a great uproar, exactly at the time the patient had his vision. It was as if they, too, had become aware of something terrible. As this happened, the patient fell into a coma and expired a few minutes later" (pp. 41-2). Some "yamdoots" have a fearful appearance and cause even more consternation in the dying.

This is the most striking difference between the American and the Indian experience of dying in the study of Drs. Osis and Haraldsson, but the authors can give no explanation for it. One naturally wonders: Why is the modern American experience almost totally lacking in an element — the fear produced by frightful other-worldly apparitions — so common both in the Christian experience of the past and the present-day Indian experience?

It is not necessary for us to define precisely the nature of the apparitions of the dying in order to see that they depend to some extent, as we have already seen, on what the dying person *expects* or is *prepared* to see. Thus, Christians of past centuries who had a lively belief in hell, and whose conscience accused them in the end, often saw demons at death; Indians of today, who are certainly more "primitive" than Americans in their beliefs and understanding, often see beings that cor-

respond to their still very real fears about the afterlife; while contemporary Americans, with their "enlightened" views, see apparitions in harmony with their "comfortable" life and beliefs, which in general do not include a very realistic fear of hell or awareness of demons.

On the objective side, the demons themselves offer temptations which accord with the spiritual state or expectations of those being tempted. For those who fear hell, the demons may appear in terrible forms in order to make a person die in a state of despair; but for those who do not believe in hell (or for Protestants who believe they are infallibly "saved" and therefore need not fear hell) the demons would naturally offer temptations in some other form that would not so clearly expose their evil intent. Likewise, even to a Christian struggler who has already suffered much, the demons may appear in such a way as to *seduce* him rather than frighten him.

The demonic temptations that beset St. Maura, the 3rd century martyr, as she was dying, offer a good example of this latter kind of temptation at the hour of death. After being crucified for nine days together with her husband, St. Timothy, she was tempted by the devil. The Life of these saints tells how St. Maura herself related her temptations to her husband and fellow-martyr:

"Take courage, my brother, and banish sleep from yourself. Be vigilant and know what I have seen; it seemed to me that before me, when I was in a kind of ecstasy, was a man who had in his hand a cup filled with milk and honey. This man said to me 'Take this and drink.' But I said to him: 'Who are you?' And he replied: 'I am an angel of God.' Then I said to him: 'Let us pray to the Lord.' Then he said to me: 'I have come to you in order to ease your sufferings. I saw that you greatly desired to eat and drink, since until this moment you have not eaten any food.' Then I said to him: 'Who inspired you to show me this mercy? And what do my patience and fasting matter to you? Do you not know that God is mighty to do what is impossible to men?' When I prayed, I saw that this man turned his face away toward the

west. From this I understood that this was a satanic deception; Satan wished to tempt us even on the cross. Soon after this the vision vanished.

"Then another man came up to me, and it seemed to me that he brought me to a river flowing with milk and honey, and he said to me: 'Drink.' But I replied: 'I have already told you that I will not drink either water or any other earthly drink until I shall drink the cup of death for Christ my Lord, which He Himself will mix for me with the salvation and immortality of eternal life.' When I had said this, that man drank from the river, and suddenly he himself and the river with him disappeared" (Lives of Saints, in Russian, May 3; see English translation in J.A.M. Fastre, S.J., *The Acts of the Early Martyrs,* Fifth Series, Philadelphia, 1878, pp. 227-8). The third apparition to St. Maura, that of a true angel, will be quoted later in this study; but here already it is clear what caution true Christians have in accepting "revelations" at the time of death.

The hour of death, then, is indeed a time of demonic temptation, and the "spiritual experiences" which people have at this time (even if they seem to be "after" death — a point yet to be discussed below) are to be subjected to the same standard of Christian teaching as are any other "spiritual experiences." Likewise, the "spirits" who may be encountered at this time are to be subjected to the universal test which the Apostle John expresses in the words: *Test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world* (I John 4:1).

Some critics of today's "after-death" experiences have already pointed out the similarity of the "being of light" to the "spirit guides" and "spirit friends" of mediumistic spiritism. Let us therefore look briefly at the spiritistic teaching where it talks about "beings of light" and their messages. One standard spiritistic text (J. Arthur Hill, *Spiritualism, Its History, Phenomena and Doctrine,* New York, George H. Doran Co., 1919), notes that "the spirits' teaching is always or practically always in line with high moral standards; in the matter of belief it is always theistic, always reverent, but not much

concerned with intellectual niceties such as occupied the minds of Bishops in Church Councils" (p. 235). Further, this book states that *love* is the "key-note" and "central doctrine" of spiritistic teaching (p. 283); that "glorious knowledge" is received from the spirits, causing spiritists to undertake the missionary labor of spreading "the knowledge that life after death is a certainty" (pp. 185-6); and that the "advanced" spirits lose the "limitations" of personality and become more like "influences" than persons, becoming more and more full of "light" (pp. 300-1). Indeed, spiritists in their hymns literally invoke "beings of light":

"Holy ministers of light!
Hidden from our mortal sight . . .
Send thy messengers of light
To unseal our inward sight" (pp. 186-7).

All of this is enough to make one quite suspicious of the "being of light" who is now appearing to people who are quite unaware of the nature and subtlety of the workings of demons. Our suspicion is only increased when we hear Dr. Moody report that some describe this being as "a fun person" with "a sense of humor" who gives the dying person "a good time" and "fun" (*Life After Life,* pp. 49, 51). *Such* a being, with his message of "love and understanding," does indeed sound remarkably like the trivial and often good-humored "spirits" at seances, who are unquestionably demons (when the seance itself is not fraudulent).

This fact has led some to condemn the whole "after-death" experience now being reported as a demonic deception. One book, by evangelical Protestants, declares that "we feel that there are certain new and unfamiliar dangers to this whole life-after-death deception. Believing even vaguely in the reported clinical experiences, we feel, can have serious consequences for Bible-believing people. More than one sincere Christian has totally bought the fact that the Being of Light is none other than Jesus Christ and, unfortunately, these people are in a perfect position to be fooled" (John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *Is There Life After Death?* Harvest House Publishers, Irvine, Calif. 1977, p. 76). To back up this point,

the authors of this book cite some remarkable parallels between some of today's "after-death" experiences and the experiences of mediums and occultists in recent times, in addition to pointing out the undoubted fact that a number of researchers in "after-death" experiences are also interested in the occult and even have had contact with mediums (pp. 64-70).

There is, of course, much truth in these observations. Unfortunately, without the *full* Christian teaching on life after death, even the most well-meaning "Bible-believing people" go astray, dismissing the true experiences of the soul after death together with experiences that may indeed be demonic deceptions. Such people themselves are open to the acceptance of misleading "after-death" experiences, as we shall see.

Drs. Osis and Haraldsson, who both have had "extensive firsthand experience with mediums," note some similarity between the apparitions of the dying and the experiences of spiritism. However, they note a basic "glaring discrepancy" between these two kinds of experience: "Instead of a continuation of the mundane sort of life (which mediums describe), postmortem survival appears to plunge into a radically new mode of existence and way of experiencing" (*At the Hour of Death,* p. 200). Indeed, the realm of "after-death" experiences does seem on the whole to be quite distinct from the realm of ordinary mediumism and spiritism; but it is still a realm in which demonic deceptions and suggestions are not only possible, but are positively to be expected, especially in the latter days in which we live, when we are already seeing ever newer and more subtle spiritual temptations, even *great signs and wonders, so as to seduce, if possible, even the elect* (Matt. 24:24)

It befits us, therefore, to be very suspicious (at the least) of the "beings of light" who seem to appear in the moment of death. They seem very much like demons posing as "angels of light" in order to seduce, not only the dying person himself, but even more those to whom he will later tell his tale if he is resuscitated (concerning the chances of which, of course, the demons are well aware).

Ultimately, however, our judgment of this and the other "after-death" phenomena will have to rest on the *doctrine* which emerges from them, whether given by some "spiritual being" seen in the moment of death, or simply implied by or deduced from the phenomena. We shall approach the question of this judgment after our examination of the phenomena themselves is finished.

Some people who have "died" and returned — usually those who are or become the most "religious" — have identified the "being of light" which they encounter not as an angel, but as the invisible "presence" of Christ Himself. In such people this experience is often bound up with another phenomenon which for Orthodox Christians is perhaps, at first glance, the most puzzling one to be encountered in today's "after-death" experience: the vision of "heaven."

To be continued.

"A spiritual famine will descend
upon the whole world. Prepare for it."
Elder Nectarius of Optina

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(Continued from p. 15.)

It is appropriate for Orthodox Christians, on the day of repose of the departed, to commemorate them at the Divine Liturgy and offer memorial services for the repose of their souls. The date of repose is indicated first in this list, and the year of repose after the names.

Jan. 16/29 ARCHBISHOP APOLLINARY (1933), preserver of the canonical Russian Orthodox Church in America.

Jan. 17/30 BISHOP SAVVA of Edmonton (1973), preacher of spiritual awakening and chronicler of the holy life of Archbishop John Maximovitch.

Feb. 6/19 ARCHBISHOP THEOPHAN of Poltava (1940), a leading theologian of the Diaspora, noted as an ascetic and man of prayer, who ended his days as a cave-dweller in the south of France.

Feb. 11/24 ARCHBISHOP SIMON of Shanghai (1933), missionary, ascetic, theologian, and miracle-worker.

Mar. 8/21 ARCHBISHOP VITALY of Jordanville (1960), printer-missionary in the tradition of St. Job at Pochaev, in Carpatho-Russia, and in America.

Mar. 17/30 ARCHBISHOP TIKHON of San Francisco (1963), strict ascetic and man of prayer, disciple of the holy elder Gabriel of Pskov, in the Optina tradition.

Mar. 31/Apr. 13 ARCHBISHOP AVERKY of Jordanville (1976), righteous Orthodox accuser of renovationism and ecumenism in the Church.

May 8/21 METROPOLITAN ANASTASSY (1965), second Chief Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, known because of his sobriety and tactfulness as the "most wise".

June 19/July 2 ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVITCH (1966), ascetic, theologian, missionary, and miracle-worker.

June 19/July 2 ARCHBISHOP LEONTY of Chile (1971), sufferer under Communism, supporter of the Greek old calendarists, righteous accuser of church injustice, who was granted to die on the fifth anniversary of the repose of his blessed Abba, Archbishop John.

July 28/Aug. 10 METROPOLITAN ANTHONY Khrapovitsky (1936), first Chief Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, Orthodox apologist and inspirer of church youth.

Sept. 30/Oct. 13 ARCHIMANDRITE GERASIM of Spruce Island (1969), guardian of the relics and memory of St. Herman in Alaska.

Oct. 7/20 BISHOP JONAH of Manchuria (1925), disciple of Optina elders, educator of children in the Church's spirit, miracle-worker.

Nov. 13/26 ARCHBISHOP IOASAPH of Canada and Argentina (1955), missionary, disseminator of the monastic ideal, founder of Canadian sketes, miracle-worker.

ARCHBISHOP THEOPHANES OF POLTAVA

Feb. 6, 1940

ARCHBISHOP AVERKY OF JORDANVILLE

March 31, 1976

LETTERS

(*Continued*)

Faith is in the church only, or the monastery, or in the home of Orthodox Christians. Orthodoxy is everywhere . . . because God is everywhere. I felt very close to St. John of Kronstadt at this time — maybe he was trying to tell me something?

"The Optina Prayer
of St. John of Kronstadt"

"O Lord, grant unto me that with Thy peace I may greet all that this day is to bring. Grant unto me grace to surrender myself completely to Thy holy will. In every hour of this day instruct and guide me in all things. Whatever tidings I may receive during this day, do Thou teach me to accept tranquilly in the firm belief that Thy holy will governs all. Govern Thou my thoughts and feelings in all I do and say. When unforeseen things occur, let me not forget that all is sent by Thee. Teach me to behave sincerely and reasonably toward everyone, that I may bring confusion and sorrow to no one. Bestow on me, O Lord, strength to endure the fatigue of the day and to bear my part in its events. Guide Thou my will and teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to suffer, to forgive, and to love."

M., Washington

Ed. comment: This text is in fact a faithful translation of what is usually known as the "Prayer of the Optina Elders" (having been composed by them), which for some reason has become associated in English with St. John of Kronstadt also. It is a prayer to be said in the morning, and it is most appropriate, with its petitions for peace of soul and acceptance of God's will, in our disturbed and restless century. The late I. M. Andreyev (on whom see The Orthodox Word, *no. 73) observed its beneficial effects both in Russia and abroad, and has especially encouraged its daily use among Orthodox Christians, having written an instructive commentary on it (Russian text in St. Vladimir Calendar for 1973, pp. 25-28).*

POLISH ORTHODOX

I am Polish by descent, of parents who were anti-Communist political refugees from Poland. I and many of my Polish friends who are your subscribers have found your magazine a great comfort and an inspiration. Many of these friends are former Roman Catholics, who were traditionalists scandalized by the "reforms" of Vatican II and subsequently became Greek Catholics (i.e., Uniates). This was motivated by their sincere Slavic sense of piety and by their frustration with the disintegration of the Latin rite. Your magazine and "Orthodox Life" were the only magazines that they could find providing them with spiritual reading unlike any other religious magazines. Thus, they are moving toward Orthodoxy, finding your orientation increasingly as the only acceptable one. It seems that in order to be "truly Catholic" they must become Orthodox. Your articles on things such as the "Immaculate Conception" have made them aware of what is the real Catholic teaching on this matter as opposed to the Roman Catholic innovations. Your articles on the Orthodox saints of the West have also been helpful. Keep up your inspiring, uncompromisingly traditional orientation, for truth by its very nature is exclusive. May God bless you!

S., Michigan

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